

210 Elizabeth Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850-1207



March 20, 2004

COMMUNITY PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Ms. Anita Neal Powell, Chair
City of Rockville Historic District Commission
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Ms. Powell

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Jerusalem-Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church's Certificate of Approval request for demolition of Cordelia House, 17 Wood Lane, Rockville, Maryland.

My grandmother was a member of Jerusalem-Mt. Pleasant, and my mother attended Jerusalem-Mt. Pleasant on a regular basis while growing up in Rockville.

Cordelia House is indeed an historic site, but it is just that, a site. The true history and legacy of Cordelia House and Jerusalem-Mt. Pleasant is not connected to a building; it is linked to the perseverance and commitment of its past and present members. These individuals struggled and succeeded in meeting the religious needs of their congregation, as well as reaching out to address the concerns of the citizens of Rockville and Montgomery County. Jerusalem-Mt. Pleasant's ongoing relationship and cooperation with other religious organizations in Rockville and Montgomery County and its long history of support to the Community Ministries of Rockville are examples of the church's involvement in activities which benefit residents of the city and county. This is especially meaningful in an era of decreased local, state, and Federal assistance to the less fortunate, and an increase in the expectations of the religious organizations to meet the many physical and social needs of disadvantaged members of our community.

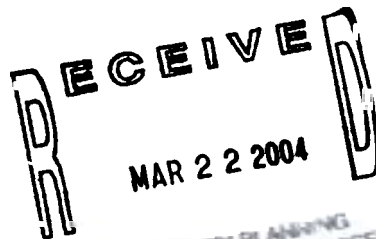
I urge the Historic District Commission to approve Jerusalem-Mt. Pleasant's request to demolish Cordelia House, so it can expand its ability to continue providing necessary and much needed services which will benefit our entire community.

Sincerely,

Lucinda R Hall

Lucinda R. Hall

✓cc: Judith A. Christensen, Historic Preservation Staff



March 19, 2004

Rev. Jane Wood
Jerusalem Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church
21 Wood Lane
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Rev. Wood:

I understand from the Historic District Commission proceedings last night that you did not have access to all of the information needed about Peerless Rockville's offers to the Church in recent years.

Since this question has arisen, I'm enclosing copies of letters from Peerless to Jerusalem Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church dated 1996 and 1999. These letters were part of a continuing dialogue between our organizations, so also enclosed is a copy of a memo to Rev. Hattie Jackson regarding possible funding sources for improvements at the Church property. A copy of Peerless Rockville's recent submission for the record is also enclosed. The same information is being sent to the Historic District Commission for the hearing record.

We hope you know that Peerless Rockville is ready to be of assistance to you and the congregation as you make decisions about the fate of a very important building in our city.

Sincerely,


Eileen McGuckian
Executive Director

✓ Cc: Rockville Historic District Commission **FOR THE HEARING RECORD**



P.O. Box 4262 * Rockville, Maryland 20849-4262
(301)762-0096 * fax (301)762-0961

MEMORANDUM TO: Rev. Hattie Jackson
Jerusalem-Mt. Pleasant Church
FROM: Eileen McGuckian, Peerless Rockville
RE: Possible funding sources for construction

Nov. 7, 1996

Peerless Rockville applauds you and the Administrative Council for wishing to make Jerusalem Church accessible to all members of the congregation. The construction you described to me -- interior elevator and enlarged bathrooms -- seems an excellent solution.

I am pleased that you contacted Peerless Rockville for information on funding sources. As I noted on the telephone, I see little likelihood of obtaining the entire estimated \$50,000 cost from a single source. In the time available prior to your Council meeting, I was able to gather some ideas and make calls, and wish to place the following on your table for consideration:

* **Community campaign:** solicit local businesses, nearby residents, church members, other area churches, Community Ministries, etc. I am prepared to recommend to Peerless Rockville's Board of Directors (which meets Nov. 14) that Peerless pledge the first substantial contribution to this campaign.

I think a community campaign might best be received in conjunction with a program to revitalize the church. Perhaps publishing your recently-updated history -- affixing a plaque -- inviting former and present members to join the community in celebrating 170 years of Methodism on the site -- collecting photos of the church and its activities over the years, etc. Two members of Jerusalem Church, and I were impressed and rejuvenated by a re-dedication we attended recently at Warren U.M.C. in Martinsburg.

* **The Methodist Conference** may have money available, perhaps on a matching basis with local funds. **Rockville United Methodist Church** should be interested in assisting its sister congregation.

* **Public agencies and preservation sources:** I have called agencies involved in accessibility and historic preservation issues, and will get information to you as soon as I receive it. Public agencies must keep religious institutions at arms' length, but good possibilities exist for preservation and accessibility. As examples, "Sacred Places" is a preservation movement to help keep small, historic churches (such as Jerusalem) viable, and I have been in touch with the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities. I will follow up with these sources very soon.

November 18, 1996

Mr. Rupert Curry
Chairman, Administrative Council
Jerusalem-Mount Pleasant Church
21 Wood Lane
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Curry:

Peerless Rockville has admired Jerusalem Church for the two decades our organization has been active in preserving Rockville's rich heritage. You may recall that in 1980 one of Peerless' first awards was presented to the Church "for preserving the past in a current building of worship".

Today, Peerless Rockville is aware of the difficulties of maintaining older buildings and of the Administrative Council's wish to modernize the Church. We applaud you for seeking solutions which would make Jerusalem accessible to all members of your congregation while retaining its historic character. Peerless is most pleased to respond to Rev. Jackson's request for information on funding sources to accomplish this work.

Last week, Peerless Rockville's Board of Directors voted unanimously to offer \$1,000 to Jerusalem-Mount Pleasant Church toward the construction of an interior elevator for handicap access. This pledge is envisioned as an early contribution through which the Church could attract other substantial donations in a fund-raising campaign for this purpose.

In addition, Peerless is available to help identify funds for this project and to work with you on other activities to revitalize the Church. Jerusalem and Peerless have a number of mutual members who should be interested in participating.

Please call Eileen McGuckian, our executive director, at 762-0096 to discuss how Peerless Rockville might help.

Sincerely,

Philip L. Cantelon
President



Peerless Rockville
P.O. Box 4262
Rockville, MD 20849-4262

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Fax: 301.762.0961
Email: peerless@millkern.com
Web page: <http://millkern.com/peerless>

February 18, 1999

Mr. John Walker, Sr.
Chairman, Board of Trustees
Jerusalem-Mount Pleasant Church
21 Wood Lane
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Walker:

Please accept Peerless Rockville's condolences for the recent fire damage at the Parsonage. Unfortunately, historic buildings are too often a target for arsonists. That the Parsonage was hurt by an individual Cordelia House sought to assist is particularly tragic.


Knowing how important the Parsonage is to the congregation of Jerusalem-Mount Pleasant Church and to those of us in the community who appreciate its rich history and pleasant architectural lines, we wish to assist you in restoring the building. Peerless Rockville here offers \$1,000 toward reconstruction and restoration of the Parsonage. This pledge can be used by you as an early contribution through which the Church can attract other substantial donations in a fund-raising campaign for this purpose.

Peerless Rockville has admired Jerusalem Church for the 25 years our organization has worked to preserve Rockville's historic places. Jerusalem Church and Peerless have a number of mutual members. In 1980 one of Peerless' first historic preservation awards was presented to the Church "for preserving the past in a current building of worship".

Today, Peerless Rockville is aware of the difficulties of maintaining older buildings. With others in the Rockville community, we want to work with you and to help identify funds for this project and others important to Jerusalem-Mt. Pleasant Church.

Please call Eileen McGuckian, our executive director, at 301-762-0096 to discuss how Peerless Rockville might help.

Sincerely,


Philip L. Cantelon
President

EM McGuckian
Note: Spoke w/ Mr. Walker several times Feb. 1999 in follow-up.

**Testimony of Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation
Regarding Jerusalem Parsonage
to the
Rockville Historic District Commission**

March 21, 2000

Good evening.

I am Sima Osdoby, Acting Executive Director of Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation.

Peerless Rockville safeguards and promotes Rockville's past by preserving buildings, spaces, objects, and information important to our city's heritage. Peerless Rockville advances its goals through education, example, advocacy, and community involvement. For 25 years Peerless has served Rockville citizens, businesses and organizations as the city's nonprofit, historic preservation organization. Over these years we have worked with many of the city's residents, businesses, and institutions to provide technical assistance, perform research, and find creative means of financing to save, preserve or stabilize buildings important to the community's history.

Buildings and objects are important because they are testaments to the people who came before us. They can help tell us about the lives they led, what they aspired to, the communities and attitudes and conditions that shaped their lives. They can tell us about the good and the bad; about what we are proud of and what we are not so proud of. Sometimes they help us remember what we would really rather forget. They represent a legacy that helps us to understand who we are today and we may choose to go tomorrow.

The Jerusalem Parsonage may not be as "beautiful" as the Parthenon or the Pyramids, but Jerusalem Parsonage is definitely one of those buildings that tells an important story.

Jerusalem Church and Jerusalem a Parsonage lie within a Rockville Historic District. The property is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Parsons used to live in parsonages next to churches. We don't have too many examples of that left. When the Parsonage was built in 1912, only six out of the 40

“Negro” congregations in Montgomery County had a Minister who served that church alone. Jerusalem was one of those six.

Jerusalem Church, Jerusalem Parsonage, and Lincoln High School are the only representatives of black-built, black-owned buildings that currently have Rockville historic district designation. The Parsonage is the ONLY residence remaining from our black community that is in a Rockville historic district.

In fact, downtown Rockville now has only four buildings left of the black community that are black-built and black-owned that existed prior to urban renewal. In addition to the church and the parsonage, the others are the Hebron house and Snowden funeral home.

The church and the parsonage have been important contributors to this community. When fire gutted the building in February 1999, the Parsonage was serving as a shelter. When organization serve the community they should get something back in terms of support.

Sometimes it seems that we look at old buildings like old people. They can really seem to be a nuisance. They require a lot of energy and sometimes a lot of money. But they can pay back great dividends. Often, it takes a lot of patience and a lot of creativity to make the relationship work out.

Over the years Peerless has had a lot of different experiences making difficult, but important, buildings work. Each of the building we have worked with has presented a different challenge. In each case, we have learned something new, and working in partnership, we have been able to make the buildings work well for their owners and for the community.

In many cases demolition seems like the only sound financial solution. In most cases, however, we have found that not only has preservation worked, but also that it has added value. Preservation has worked financially, and has helped our community honor the wisdom of its past. Tonight I am extending an invitation to the church. We are realistic. We understand that there will be challenges. We would like to work with you to take something that may be seen by many as an eyesore and a deficit and help you turn it into an asset.

Thank you.



March 8, 2004

Ms. Anita Neal Powell
Chair, Historic District Commission
City Hall, 111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: HDC2003-00284

Dear Ms. Powell:

The application by Jerusalem Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church to raze the parsonage on Wood Lane is a difficult case. The structure is a contributing element to the local and National Register historic districts. With the Church, it is one of the few remnants of a long-time, vibrant black community that lived, worked, and played in what is now known as Rockville Town Center. Each of those remnants is precious, and each should be given the opportunity to survive. Once a historic building is gone, it is gone forever.

The building at 17 Wood Lane has served the Jerusalem congregation for nearly a century. As parsonage, meeting place, and shelter, it has augmented the good work of the Church. With the historic Church, it presents a streetscape of Black history that, if removed, could never be replicated. A vital aspect of this religious complex is its simple but symbolic and practical face to Wood Lane.

Peerless Rockville has always considered this Church and its congregation as good friends. Friends help each other, and Peerless has been there to provide information, advice, and a preservation award; to help with grant applications; and to work with the congregation since the 1970s. After the parsonage fire, Peerless quickly offered to raise funds for rebuilding and offered a solid donation of its own. That offer is still valid. Friends can also differ. Given the place of the parsonage in Rockville history, Peerless would be remiss in its mission if it did not point out the importance and possibilities of saving this structure for the future of not just the congregation but the entire community.

Jerusalem Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church is a solid congregation with a strong new, locally-based pastor determined to help it grow. It is clear that the Church owns sufficient land on Wood Lane and through to Beall Avenue to meet current and future needs for improvement and growth. There are numerous ways to encourage the Church to prosper on its property while retaining its historic character, environment, and streetscape. The HDC staff report contains good suggestions to explore. Another consideration might be to retain the front sections of the porch and parsonage and build an addition to the

rear that would connect with the Church building and make both structures larger and accessible.

The Church would be short-sighted if it pressed to win this battle to tear down the parsonage, only to lose the war of growing the congregation and maintaining its rightful, continuing place in Rockville's history. The parsonage building can be repaired and modified to serve the needs and dreams of today's congregation. To preserve a building is not to pickle it and set it aside. Preservation makes buildings work for today's needs.

Sincerely,



Suzanne E. Fisher

President

Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, Ltd.



Eileen S. McGuckian

Executive Director